

REMARKS

I. Introduction

With the cancellation herein without prejudice of claim 2, claims 1 and 3 to 31 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter contained in claims 2, 6 and 8. In this regard, the Examiner will note that claim 1 has been amended herein without prejudice to include all of the limitations of claim 2 and that claim 2 has been canceled herein without prejudice. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 1 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 3 to 5, 7, 8 and 29 ultimately depend from claim 1 and are therefore in condition for immediate allowance.

Each of claims 6 and 8 has been rewritten herein in independent form to include all of the limitations of its respective base claim and any intervening claims. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 6 and 8 are in condition for immediate allowance.

III. Rejection of Claims 1, 5, 7 and 29 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1, 5, 7 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,007,743. While Applicants do not agree with the merits of this rejection, to facilitate matters, as indicated above, claim 1 has been amended herein without prejudice to include all of the limitations of claim 2, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 1 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 5, 7 and 29 ultimately depend from claim and are therefore also in condition for immediate allowance.

In summary, it is respectfully submitted that the present rejection is moot, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. Rejection of Claims 1, 3 to 5, 7 and 29 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1, 3 to 5, 7 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,060,165. While Applicants do not agree with the merits of this rejection, to facilitate matters, as indicated above, claim 1 has been amended herein without prejudice to include all of the limitations of claim 2, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 1 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 3 to 5, 7 and 29 ultimately depend from claim and are therefore also in condition for immediate allowance.

In summary, it is respectfully submitted that the present rejection is moot, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

V. Allowed Claims 9 to 28, 30 and 31

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that claims 9 to 28, 30 and 31 are allowed.

VI. Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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